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SPEXAMINER

PRESS

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KANSAS CITY — (AP) — Former reporter Peter Bridge predicts increasing numbers of newsmen will be jailed for refusing to disclose their sources or to make public their notes unless action is taken to guarantee a "newsman's privilege."

Bridge, who spent three weeks in jail recently after refusing to answer some questions before a grand jury regarding a story he wrote for the now-defunct Newark Evening News, made his comments yesterday at the Associated Press Managing Editors convention here.

Bridge told the nearly 600 journalists and guests at the meeting here that the question of a reporter's right to protect confidential sources and notes is "a people issue rather than a press issue."

He said the public will suffer far more than the press if newsmen are not allowed to keep their notes and the identities of their sources

confidential in all cases. The effect of permitting government to require disclosure, he said, would be to thoroughly discourage investigative reporting.

"We can still print press releases," he said. "But the public won't have the information that it's got to have."

New York Times reporter Earl Caldwell, the central

figure in a case in which the Supreme Court ruled that reporters have no special constitutional protection against being required to assist grand jury investigators, saw a recent trend which he said has had several inhibiting effects on the press.

The high court's ruling, the jailing of Bridge and other recent developments have tended to prompt wariness among reporters and sources alike, Caldwell said.

He said he and some other reporters have destroyed confidential files that would have benefited them in future reporting and later aided historians. He also said some sources who once might have provided information freely may now be thinking twice.